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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined the relationship of principals' change facilitator styles to school effectiveness in different socioeconomic contexts are presented in this paper. Data were collected through a survey of 472 public elementary school teachers in 53 schools in 19 Louisiana school districts. Schools were categorized according to SES composition and effectiveness. The teachers identified 39 percent of the principals as initiators, 36 percent as managers, and 25 percent as responders. Findings indicate that principals were seldom perceived by their teachers as having only one behavior style. Teachers in the more effective, low SES schools had more initiators than in the less effective, low SES schools. Managers were the most commonly found type of principal in both effective and ineffective middle SES schools. Finally, there were more responders in ineffective schools than in effective schools. Implications of the study are that principals with initiator styles should be assigned to ineffective, low SES schools to facilitate improvement, and that change facilitator style should be perceived as a continuum or combination of styles. Two tables are included. (LMI)

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Principals' Change Facilitator Styles in Schools that Differ in Effectiveness and SES

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Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to report the results of a study of the relationship of principals' change facilitator styles to school effectiveness in different SES contexts. It extends earlier context-based research on effective schools and ties together (1) a focus on the leadership component of effective schools, (2) sensitivity to SES context when studying school effectiveness, and (3) the use of the principal's change facilitator style as a way to specify leadership behavior.

Perspectives

The research on effective leadership in schools, while extensive, has been hampered by a number of methodological problems. Criticism by Good and Brophy (1986), Cuban (1983), and Purkey and Smith (1983) pointed to difficulties in a number of areas, including problems in generalizing across differing types of schools. For much of the history of school effects research, in fact, the varied contexts within which schooling occurs have been ignored (Teddlie and Stringfield, in press). Wimpelberg, Teddlie and Stringfield (1989) point to the need for sensitivity to contextual factors that may be associated with effectiveness in various settings and assert that factors such as socioeconomic (SES) level, organizational level, and urbanicity influence school effectiveness and the success of school improvement projects in ways that have not been thoroughly investigated. One such area on which school context may have an effect is efficacy of principal behaviors.

Numerous studies during the last two decades have explored principal behaviors in unusually effective schools (e.g., Weber, 1971; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; ~~Glenn, 1981;~~ Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Teddlie, Kirby & Stringfield, 1989). Many of these studies have pointed to the principal as the most critical leadership determinant of school effectiveness.

Levine and Lezotte's (1990) review of research on unusually effective schools reported briefly on studies of contextual differences, including differences in SES contexts. They

concluded that the most comprehensive and important studies explicitly seeking to determine whether or how unusually effective low status schools differ from their more affluent counterparts had been conducted by Hallinger and Murphy (1985, 1986, 1987) and Teddlie and Stringfield (1985, 1989). Both studies agreed that direct instructional leadership is more closely associated with unusual effectiveness in low SES than in more affluent schools and that different models for effectiveness may be needed for different SES schools.

A framework for examining principals' change facilitator styles has been conceptualized by Hall and Rutherford (1983), who describe three styles: initiator, manager and responder. In less affluent schools the very proactive and assertive "initiator" types have been associated with effectiveness (Wimpelberg et al., 1987), while findings of studies examining leadership in more affluent schools have revealed leaders who act like "managers" when they facilitate change (Teddlie et al., 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Based on the empirical findings of Hallinger and Teddlie, plus the theoretical change facilitator constructs of Hall, the following four hypotheses were tested in this study: (1) there will be overall differences in the frequency with which principal change facilitator styles will be selected across school effectiveness and SES categories; (2) there will be a higher percentage of teachers perceiving their principals as initiators in low SES, more effective schools than in low SES, less effective schools; (3) there will be a higher percentage of teachers perceiving their principals as managers in middle SES, more effective schools than in middle SES, less effective schools; and (4) more teachers will perceive their principals as responders in the less effective schools than in the more effective schools.

Methodology

Sample: The sample consisted of 472 public elementary school teachers in 53 schools in 19 school districts in Louisiana. All teachers in the sample had more than one year of experience, and the schools in which they taught had not had a change in principal in the past three years. A representative mix of schools from both urban and rural areas was included.

Schools in the population were divided along two strata: a) middle or low SES context, and b) effective or ineffective schools.

Instrumentation: The dependent variable was measured using the Indicators of Change Facilitator Style of Principal (CFSP) developed by Bost and Ruch (1985). The CFSP uses behavioral descriptors of initiators, managers and responders that Hall et al. (1983) found to serve as indicators of the ways principals provide leadership when implementing changes in their schools. The descriptors fall into seven sub-groups: 1) vision and goal setting, 2) structuring the school as workplace, 3) managing change, 4) collaborating and delegating, 5) decision making, 6) guiding and supporting, and 7) structuring the leadership role.

Data Analysis: Chi-square tests were used as the primary statistical technique for the study. Descriptive statistical summaries were completed for each item.

Results

Since the teacher perception data was processed as categorical data, chi-square tests were used as the primary statistical technique for this study.

Of the original sample of 472 teachers, 437 could be classified as having selected a predominant style for their principals. Predominant style is defined as the single change facilitator style among the three that is chosen most often. There were 35 teacher responses in which the most selected style was tied between two categories, and these responses were eliminated.

Across all teacher responses, 52% of their principals were perceived as initiators, 25% as managers, and 23% as responders. These results were surprising, considering the description of initiator by Hall, et al. (1983) as a proactive leader with a mission--one who not only lives up to district demands and expectations for change, but surpasses them and at times pushes the district for changes. It might have been more reasonable to have expected an equal distribution of the change facilitator styles among principals.

In fact, in Seibel's (1986) study of change facilitator styles in one school district in

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Virginia using the CFSP, 34 percent of the teachers rated their principals as initiators, 36 percent as managers, and 27 percent as responders. The propensity for the Louisiana sample to select initiators more often could be due to: (1) differences in the sample, since the Louisiana sample was based on outliers, while the Virginia sample was based on the total population of schools in the district; and (2) social desirability of some of the items, such that choosing initiator responses was the most appropriate selection.

The outlier sample was necessary to test our hypotheses of differences in change facilitator styles for effective and ineffective schools. A highly skewed distribution of scores, such as that found originally in this sample, however, could adversely affect chi-square results, since they are based on overall expected results. We did not believe it reasonable to expect that 52% of all principals would be initiators. Thus, we undertook methods to refine the instrument so that the overall frequencies reflected more closely the distribution found by Seibel (1986).

→ Reconstruction of the Instrument

If social desirability of some initiator responses was the reason for the skewed distribution, then elimination of those items for which the vast majority of responses were "initiator" might result in a more reasonable distribution. Examination of the frequency distributions for each item indicated that six items had frequency distributions in which over 57% of the responses were "initiator." We (Teddlie, Hebert and Evans, 1992) decided to eliminate those items and see what our new distribution of responses yielded.

The new distribution of responses can be seen in the most right hand column of Table 1: 39 percent of the responses were initiators; 36 percent were managers; and 25 percent were responders. Of the 472 teachers, 437 could be classified as having selected a predominant style for their principals. Since these responses more clearly represented an even distribution and since they also more closely approximated Seibel's distribution, we decided to test the hypotheses using the 30 retained items. Implications of this decision for the future use of the CFSP will be discussed in the final section of this paper.

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Tests of Hypotheses

Data presented in Table 1 include the observed frequencies, row percentages, and column percentages for teachers' perceptions of principal change facilitator style across school effectiveness and SES categories. With regard to Hypothesis 1, the data indicate that there were overall differences in the frequency with which certain principal change facilitator styles were selected across school effectiveness and SES categories ($\chi^2 = 23.3$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$). Thus, there are differences across the categories, and the remaining hypotheses tests will determine where these differences fall.

To test hypothesis 2, data from only the low SES schools were used. The chi-square test was significant ($\chi^2 = 11.60$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$), indicating that teachers in more effective, low SES schools perceived their principal's change facilitator style to be different from those in less effective, low SES schools. Specifically, 55% of the teachers in the more effective, low SES schools perceived their principals as initiators as opposed to 34.6% of those in less effective, low SES schools.

To test hypothesis 3, data from only the middle SES schools were used. The chi-square test was not significant ($\chi^2 = 0.27$, $df = 2$, p = n.s), indicating that teachers in more effective, middle SES schools did not perceive their principals' facilitator change style to be that different from those of teachers in the less effective, middle SES schools. With regard to the selection of the manager style, 44.4% of the teachers in more effective, middle SES schools picked this style as opposed to 42.9% in less effective, middle SES schools.

To test hypothesis 4, a chi-square was computed to determine if more teachers perceived their principals as responders in the ineffective schools than in the effective schools. To test this hypothesis, the data across SES categories were collapsed, yielding the results that are found in Table 2. From this table, one can clearly see that there are more responders in the ineffective schools (29.9%) than in the effective schools (19.8%). Additionally, there are more initiators in effective schools (44.3%) than in ineffective schools (33.3%). These results are statistically

significant ($\chi^2 = 7.83$, $p < .05$, $df = 2$).

Additional Analyses

To further probe the tendency of teachers to perceive initiators as the predominant style, additional analyses were undertaken. As noted above, another way of categorizing the data would be to use the percentage of teacher's responses in all three categories, rather than the predominant style. When this is done, a hypothetical initiator might be perceived by his/her teachers to have 44% initiating behaviors, 36% managing behaviors, and 20% responding behaviors. By coding the data this way, one maintains more information than by simply categorizing the principal as an initiator.

When examining data coded this way more closely, two interesting trends emerge. First, principals are very seldom perceived by their teachers as having only one behavior style. Of the 53 principals, only four were given total item responses of over 50% in just one style. The typical scoring pattern for a principal has 80% of the responses in two styles (primary/secondary) with only about 20% in the third style.

Secondly, in every case where the most frequently selected style for a principal was initiator, based on the average percent of all teachers' ratings for each style by school, the next most frequently chosen style for that principal was manager. Furthermore, in 12 out of the 13 cases where the predominant style of the principal was identified as responder, the next most frequently chosen style for that principal was manager.

Thus, if a principal was primarily perceived as an initiator, he/she was secondarily perceived as a manager, and if the principal was primarily perceived as responder, he/she was secondarily perceived as a manager. Principals were not perceived as combination responder/initiators or initiator/responders. This supports the contention that the styles could be arranged on a continuum ranging from responder to manager to initiator. In fact, Hall and Rutherford (1983, p. 59) state that managers "demonstrate both responsive behavior in answer to situations or people and they also initiate actions in support of the change effort."

Conclusions/Implications

The results of the study are important for the following reasons. First, they confirm the existence of contextual differences related to principals' leadership styles. The results have implications for school improvement models and the construction of scales measuring change facilitator styles, as well as implications for further contextually-sensitive school effects studies. A sensitivity to contextual factors in the success of school improvement efforts might begin with an appropriate match between the leadership style of the principal and the SES characteristics of the school (Teddlie and Stringfield, in press). That an initiator might be successful in low SES schools has been asserted since the late 1970s (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Brookover and Lezotte, 1979). That an initiator may not be as successful as a manager in a middle SES school was first discovered some six years ago and has been confirmed by this study. That responders may be overly represented in ineffective, as opposed to effective schools, was a logical extension of earlier research and was also empirically confirmed in this study.

The failure to confirm the hypothesis regarding managers in middle class schools is puzzling. In fact, there are more managers in effective middle SES schools than there are initiators or responders; unfortunately, that is also the case in ineffective middle SES schools. Thus managers are the most commonly found type of principal (44% of the total) in middle SES schools; it remains to be found what distinguishes an effective manager from an ineffective one in that SES context. It may be necessary to more closely ascertain their secondary style (e.g., responder or initiator). Further study may tell us, for instance, under what circumstances a manager/initiator would be most successful, as opposed to a manager/responder.

If there are differences in principals' instructional leadership behaviors in middle and low SES effective schools, then there are certainly implications for the leadership of principals as change facilitators in these different settings. The change facilitator style of the principal might be a consideration in the selection/assignment/reassignment of principals with specific characteristics to schools with different contexts. For example, the most clear cut implication

of this study is that principals who have the characteristics of initiators should be assigned to ineffective, low SES schools, if improvement is to occur. The central office could use principal completed questionnaires for classification purposes, but more reliable data would come from teachers or from other colleagues who know the principal's work style.

The findings regarding responders and ineffective schools have implications for the selection and/or replacement of responders in both SES contexts. Where replacement of a principal is not feasible, certainly central office personnel who work with the school must recognize an added responsibility to provide initiation or "push", if change (improvement) is to occur. This may take the form of working closely with a faculty to implement district-wide and school-wide innovations, providing staff development activities for the principal, and developing other sources of initiation or "substitutes" for leadership among the faculty.

The implications of these results for the school improvement process lead to a consideration of issues in the construction of scales measuring change facilitator styles. The initial evidence would lead us to conclude that change facilitator style should be perceived as a unidimensional construct; that there is a continuum ranging from the primary styles of initiator to manager to responder; and that it is more realistic to conceive of principals as employing a combination of primary/secondary styles, rather than a pure style.

Also, it appears that it is useful to think of principals as possessing initiator/manager (manager/initiator) or manager/responder (responder/manager) profiles. Such combination profiles may be more useful when make site assignments than using primary styles alone. The continuum concept allows us to dismiss initiator/responder (responder/initiator) designations as rare and, where found, possibly invalid.

Table 1

Teacher Choice of Principal Facilitator Style Across School Effectiveness and SES Categories

		Less Effective		More Effective		
		Low SES	Middle SES	Low SES	Middle SES	Total
Initiator	Observed Frequency	38	29	66	39	172
	Row Percentage	22.1	16.9	38.4	22.7	
	Column Percentage	34.6	31.9	55.0	33.3	39.3
Manager	Observed Frequency	35	39	33	52	159
	Row Percentage	22.0	24.5	20.8	32.7	
	Column Percentage	31.8	42.9	27.5	44.4	36.3
Responder	Observed Frequency	37	23	21	26	107
	Row Percentage	34.6	21.5	19.6	24.3	
	Column Percentage	33.6	25.3	17.5	22.2	24.4
Total		110 25.1	91 20.8	120 27.4	117 26.7	437 100.00

Note: Some of the column and row percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2

Teacher Choice of Principal
Facilitator Style Across School
Effectiveness Categories

		Ineffective Schools	Effective Schools
Initiator	N	67	105
	Column %	33.3	44.3
Manager	N	74	85
	Column %	36.8	35.9
Responder	N	60	47
	Column %	29.9	19.8
Total	N	201	237
	Column %	100.0	100.0